**Concept English- Flaherty**

**Mimetic Writing**

**PD Workshop – 1.5 Hours**

Teaching writing is hard. But consider having students mimic, imitate, other authors to help them enter the the writing realm. Research from National Writing Project says it works. My experience, too, has proven it builds fluency and helps students connect with the craft of writing. It is also a great way to read for details and synthesize words and ideas into writing forms.

**Let’s consider a poem by Sandra Cisneros.**

**Abuelito Who**

Abuelito who throws coins like rain

and asks who loves him

who is dough and feathers

who is a watch and a glass of water

whose hair is made of fur

is too sad to come downstairs today

who tells me in Spanish you are my diamond

who tells me in English you are my sky

whose little eyes are string

can’t come out to play

sleeps in his little room all night and day

who used to laugh like the letter k

is sick

is a doorknob tied to a sour stick

is tired shut the door

doesn’t live here anymore

is hiding underneath the bed

who talks to me inside my head

is blankets spoons and big brown shoes

who snores up and down and up and down again

is the rain on the roof that falls like coins

asking who loves him

who loves him who?

**QUESTIONS:**

How will you read it?

How would you unpack the imagery?

How does the imagery give you clues about her relationship with her grandfather?

What is the standard you are teaching?

How will you know it is mastered?

**NOTE:** Images show us instead of telling us.

**Consider another poem using this form (perhaps yours). Here is my version.**

Grandma who throws Lefsa like Frisbees

and asks who loves her

who is jelly and peanut butter

who is an agate key chain and cup of coffee

whose hair is made hay

is too happy to stop laughing today

who tells me in Norwegian you are my treasure

who tells me in English you are my loyal grandchild

whose brown eyes are chocolate peanut butter balls

can come out to play

after the chores and animals are fed

who used to cry like the s

is healthy

is a wind chime hanging from a nearby tree

is rested opens the door

doesn’t seem so sad anymore

is ironing sheets next to the bed

who talks to me inside my head

who tends chickens chores and apron strings

is the Frisbee in the air that spins across her hands like Lefsa

asking who loves her

who loves her who?

**QUESTIONS:**

How are these poems similar and different?

How will students SEE this comparison?

What standards are you teaching?

**STEPS FOR MIMETIC WRITING:**

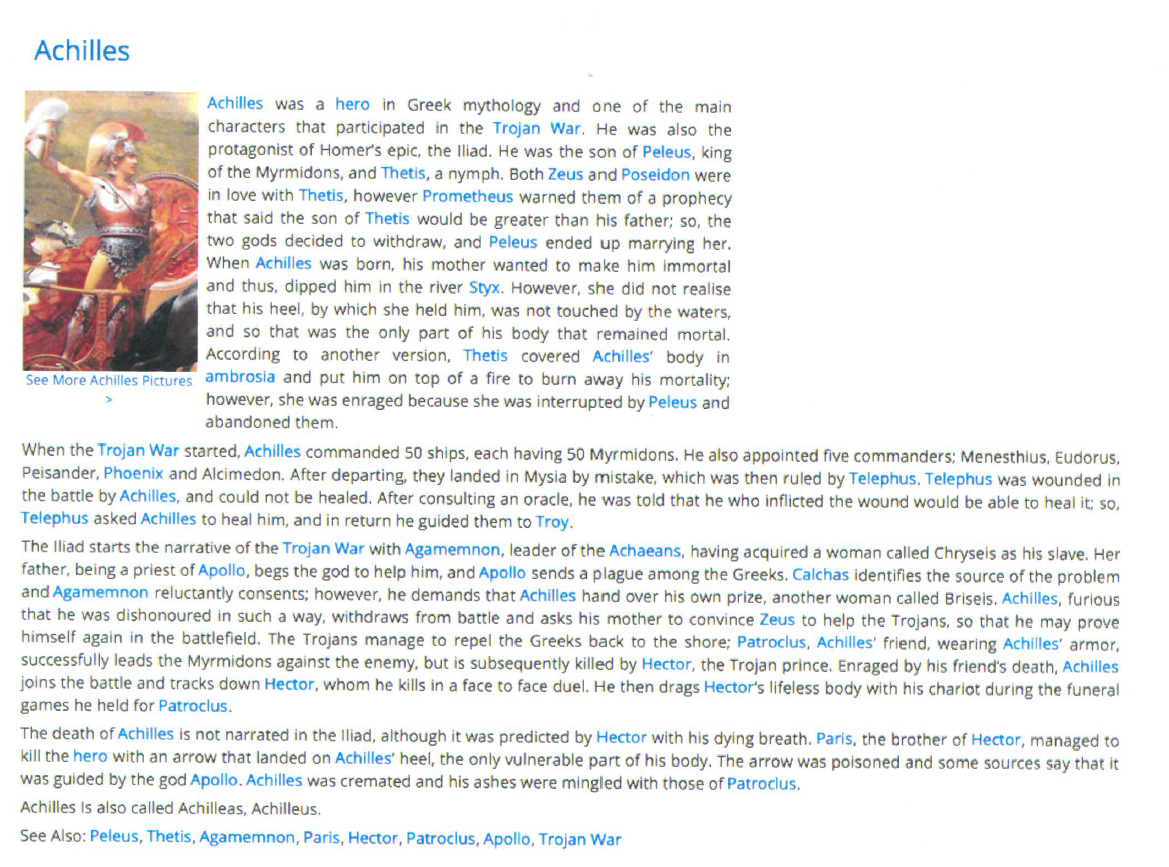
1. Chose Cisneros and/or your model and underline with students the first word or words of each line.
2. Students select a person they care deeply about.
3. Students brainstorm a list of personality traits, characteristics, as well as interests, physical features, and phrases that are unique to their chosen person.
4. Then use key aspects of the form (observed in the compare/contrast above) to use as a template.
5. Have students partner, exchange poems, and read aloud. Give guidelines or questions for talking about the writing.
6. Have students revise based on conversation.
7. Author’s chair.

**QUESTIONS:**

What skills/standards does this mimetic address?

**Connecting to content reading/writing**

For example, consider 7th grade Unit 1 Collections – Bold Actions, and you are currently reading mythology. You have chosen a piece on Achilles and you want to check the reading of facts and the use of textual evidence.



instead of simply asking questions, engage students in the use of the information they have just read.

**STEPS FOR WRITING ABOUT THE TEXT:**

1. Recall/review your writing of poems using the Cisneros template.
2. Re-read the pieces about Achilles and highlight key personality traits that you think are important in showing us who he is.
3. Using these details, you may do the exact same thing we did for our poems about a person we care about or, you may use some aspects of it.
4. Write a poem about Achilles.

**QUESTIONS:**

What standards does this address (reading and writing)?

Achilles Who?

Achilles you run and run like a river

Never remembering to embrace your pain

You are strength and weakness

The arrow to the bow entwined.

Achilles your face is stone

Your body sculpted like marble

But your cord weak

Where your mother Thetis

The sea nymph

Dipped you in the River Styx.

Achilles your armor cannot hold

What your mother held

Your Achilles heal will surrender you.

If only you had looked beyond

You might have seen the gift

The paradox of weakness living

Inside your chest like the

Men hidden in the Trojan horse

Ah, Achilles

What a gift

You have given me.

**QUESTIONS:**

Can you connect more directly to the writing goals of the unit?

Can you attach the next writing to a specific prose goal?

**Consider turning poetry into prose.**

Achilles was a hero in Greek mythology and clear a character capable of Bold Actions. He was fast and ran like a river, always appearing to escape pain. But he had both strength and weakness. The crux of the problem had to do with what happened to him when he was little. When his mother, Thetis, dipped him in the River Styx, she grabbed his heel. It is that spot, his Achilles heal, that was his weakest. In fact, today we refer to someone’s Achilles heel as their weak spot. The moral of the story is often articulated as the need to identify your weakness and prepare for them because they may keep you from harm. The paradox of strength and boldness is that we all are weak.

**QUESTIONS:**

What steps would you write to take the poem to the prose version?

**Here is a link to a creative writing blog for adults that explains the power of Mimetic Writing**

https://www.circeinstitute.org/blog/what-mimetic-teaching-lost-tools-writing-excerpt